

An Open Letter to Manufacturers.

To the Editor of the Mail:

SIR,—A prominent manufacturer, with Reform sympathies, came to me the other day with a copy of Mr. Blake's speech at Malvern, and asked my opinion as to whether I considered the interests of manufacturers safe in his hands, now that he had swallowed his convictions, and apparently, adopted the Policy of Protection to native industry, which he had erstwhile so bitterly attacked.

Having carefully read the speech referred to, I was enabled to reply that I considered it but a plausible subterfuge to catch votes, and that manufacturers would never cease to regret their action were they in this crisis to drop the substance, already within their grasp, for the shadow of an "alternative policy." I gave him my reasons for this opinion and now submit these same reasons, in brief, for the consideration of your readers.

Near the commencement of his speech Mr. Blake was careful to assure his audience "that there is, in my belief, a general concurrence of sentiment between us, including Sir R. Cartwright, whom I name only because our adversaries delight to represent him as holding other views." Mr. Blake was certainly within the mark in assuming that the friends of the National Policy believe Sir Richard to hold other views. We judge him by his acts and by his utterances. He at least has not yet turned a political somersault on the tariff question, but *per contra* his most recent deliverances have been as bitterly denunciatory of Protection as the most ardent Free Trader could desire. I only quote extracts from his speeches of a not later date than 1886. During the very last session of Parliament, in the course of his speech on the Budget, he said, "I said then [1879], and I say now, that the manufacturers, if they had known their own interest, would have been infinitely better off, in the long run, under the tariff of 1878. . . . Lastly we pointed out this, and I repeat it now, that no more stupid act of folly was ever committed than in insisting on imitating the Protective Policy of the United States." During the same session he said, amidst the applause of the Reform members: "Upon my word, Mr. Speaker, I must say that this Protection business, *in which I do not believe in the slightest degree, in any shape or form*, looking upon it as a clear robbery of the consumer, is being run into the ground."

Again, in the same debate, he reiterates his condemnation of the National Policy, or anything approaching to it, in the following language: "But I have no doubt, whatever, in my mind, as there was no doubt when this policy was proposed, *that our stupid and foolish imitation of the American Protective system*, would inevitably result, as I say it is resulting to-day, in causing a very large number of manufacturers of Canada to desire, at any cost and in any shape or fashion, to extend our markets, and to obtain a commercial, if not a political incorporation with the United States." The above extracts, which can be multiplied almost *ad infinitum* are sufficient, I think, to make any manufacturer hesitate to entrust Sir Richard with an opportunity to tinker with the tariff, when he can help to prevent such a calamitous consummation by his vote and influence.

As his speech progressed Mr. Blake took his audience into his confidence and endeavored to excuse his sudden change of front by saying, "But you know also that we are obliged to raise yearly a great sum, made greater by the obligations imposed upon us by this Government; and that we must continue to raise this sum mainly by import duties laid, to a great extent, on goods similar to those which can be manufactured here; and that it results as a necessary incident of

our settled fiscal system that there must be a large, and, as I believe, an ample advantage to the home manufacturer."

That sounds very plausible, does it not? but, after all, there does not seem to be that unanimity of opinion between Mr. Blake and Sir Richard as the former would have his audience believe. The latter gentleman takes a very different view of the case, and, in going over exactly the same ground, makes his argument particularly clear; very unlike the involved statement of his leader. Sir Richard says: "This Government must have revenue, because they are committed through no fault of their own to very formidable obligations, and gentlemen can see that if we put on a high tariff it reduces the revenue just in proportion as it affords protection."

Another part of Mr. Blake's speech to which exception may well be taken by Protectionists, as it undermines the whole of the hon. gentleman's previous and subsequent utterances, is that paragraph wherein he is reported to have said, "I then declared that any readjustment should be effected with due regard to the legitimate interests of all concerned. In that phrase [all concerned] I hope no one will object to my including, as I do, the general public."

Had not Mr. Blake and every prominent Reform placed on record, time and again, their convictions that the National Policy was legalized robbery of the general public, no one could have objected to this little bit of special pleading, but the following quotations will, I think, prove that this very sentence affords Mr. Blake and the entire Reform party a wide avenue of retreat. Sir Richard's unalterable convictions are that the interests of the general public cannot be conserved as long as this outrageous and oppressive tariff is allowed to remain, and says: "As regards the great bulk of the people, every day's experience has demonstrated its worthlessness." And again, to re-quote, "I must say that this Protection business, in which I do not believe in the slightest degree, in any shape or form, looking upon it as a clear robbery of the consumers, is being run into the ground."

Another statement of Mr. Blake's that merits criticism is, that "We have a deficit to overcome, and that done, we have a tremendous charge to overtake. 'O, but,' say some Tories, 'you can yet do this and make a free trade or non-protective tariff.' The statement is dishonest and absurd."

Neither dishonest nor absurd, Mr. Blake, although you include your own lieutenants in your sweeping denunciation; for was it not Mr. Paterson (Brant) who stated from his seat in the House of Commons, on the evening of April 16th, 1886, that "If he the [Minister of Finance] wants money, as there is no doubt he does, it would be better for the people of Canada if he put the increased duty which he proposed to put on sugar, on tea and coffee." Such a staunch Reform paper as the *Montreal Witness* also rises to remark: "Mr. Blake knows that the tariff may be lowered and yet the revenue increased by the operation, while the taxation is lightened."

The points I have drawn attention to are but a few of those wherein there is such a lack of harmony between the professions of the leader of the Reform party and the convictions of his most prominent supporters; that not only manufacturers, but every Protectionist may well distrust the genuineness of such an eleventh hour conversion. I doubt not that on election day they will decide, like my friend the manufacturer with Reform sympathies, to cast in their lot with the party which has not yet faltered in the patriotic work of developing our material resources, for "A country which manufactures for itself prospers."

FREDERIC NICHOLLS,

Secretary of the Industrial League.

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